



Jessa Agilo [b. 1969]

Arts, culture + social justice

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Profile

Jessa Agilo is an integrated arts creator, producer, educator, knowledge seeker, changemaker, activist, and serial social entrepreneur with a three-decade career boosting social, spatial, economic, digital, and accessibility justice with, by, and for equity-seeking groups across all disciplines in Canadian arts, cultural and creative industries.

A proud queer transsexual with a mental and physical disability, Jessa is devoted to critical access and inclusion for equity-seeking groups of all kinds in both real and virtual spaces. Human-centered design, collective impact, critical access, open source social-technical systems, community-engaged arts, ethical knowledge seeking and stewardship, Indigenous reconciliation, grassroots collective actions, intentional mutual aid networks, community land trusts, platform cooperatives, and equity-centered social finance and social innovation are approaches that underlie her work every day.

Jessa has been featured in national and international media including The Canadian Press, CBC, CityNews, Toronto Star, Globe&Mail, Culture24 (UK), and more. She is currently a fellow of Wolf Willow Institute's Positive Deviants (2021-22). She was a fellow of Toronto Arts Council's Leaders Lab (2019) and received the Humberto Santos Award in Business and Administration in 2006. Recent and upcoming reports include "Research Insights: Designing a cooperative digital future for managing the arts", "What Space: Spatial precarity, gentrification, and the arts", "I Lost My Gig Canada COVID19 Impact Survey", and "So Far: Collective steps toward a positive digital future in Canadian arts and culture".

Professional Experience

Founder, President + CEO | ArtsPond / Étang d'Arts (2014 - present)

Founder of a national non-profit nurturing healthy ecosystems that cultivate social cohesion and boost spatial, economic, digital, accessibility, and equity justice in the arts in both real and virtual communities. By 2022, I grew ArtsPond's annual budget to \$0.6M, human resources exceeding 24 direct reports, 12,000+ members, fans, and followers, and 200+ community partners and advisors from all 13 Canadian provinces/territories and internationally, featuring 3.1M annual media impressions reaching 170+ countries world-wide. Major actions include:

- **Researcher, Canada Council for the Arts**, national arts research service provider, post-pandemic recovery and more (2021-)
- **Founder, Together There / Ensemble là-bas**, national social-technical justice knowledge and ecosystem building (2021-)
- **Founder, Groundtrust**, cultural land trust feasibility study, including social finance and space acquisition strategies (2020-)
- **Founder, COVID-19 Task Force**, national pandemic response collaboration (2020-)
- **Founder, I Lost My Gig Canada / J'ai perdu mon contrat Canada**, pandemic mutual aid network and research (2020-)
- **Founder, Digital Arts Services Alliance / Alliance des services d'arts numériques**, national digital justice circles (2020-)
- **Founder, Ecosystems Map**, open source ecosystems map for digital and public art initiatives, stories, needs (2020-)
- **Founder, Hatch Open**, open source arts management and impact investing software platform (2019-)
- **Founder, Digital Arts Services Symposium / Symposium des services d'arts numériques**, national digital literacy (2017-)
- **Founder, Groundstory / Histoire de terrain**, spatial justice collective impact effort in Greater Toronto / Hamilton Area (2017-)
- **Founder, DigitalASO / OSANumériques**, national equitable digital innovation ecosystem (2016-)
- **Founder, Artse United**, arts management platform cooperative (2014-)

Producer | Agilo Arts (2005 - present)

Integrated arts creator, designer, manager, producer, researcher, agent, and social-technical development consultant empowering equity-seeking gig economy workers and small enterprises in the arts, culture, heritage, and creative industries. Major development strategy credits:

Indigenous @ The Banff Centre, The Power Plant, Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario, Brick: A Literary Journal, Art Gallery at York University, Basic Income Network, Canadian New Music Network, Professional Association of Canadian Theatres, Citadel + Co, Creative Users Projects, ArtsPond, Roseneath Theatre, Ontario Culture Days, Workman Arts, lbs/sq" performance, Dreamwalker Dance Company, Anandam Dancetheatre, hum dansoundart, black&blue, Queer Arts Festival, The Chimera Project, Zata Omm,

adelheid, Nightswimming, Modern Times, Business for the Arts, Blue Metropolis Foundation, Kaeja d’Dance, Canadian Dance Assembly, Dancer Transition Resource Centre, Dance Ontario, and many others

Major education credits:

IBM/Ontario Trillium Foundation Digital Transformation Collaborative (2020), CPAMO Essential Digital Tools (2020), Funding Digital Strategy Projects (2020), Essentials for Artists-Producers (2019), Urban Planning @ University of Toronto (2019-), iSchool @ University of Toronto (2019), Creative Industries @ Ryerson University (2019-), Arts Management @ Humber College (2018-)

Major research credits:

Research Insights: Designing a cooperative digital future for managing the arts (2020), What Space: Spatial precarity, gentrification, and the arts (2020), I Lost My Gig Canada COVID19 Impact Survey / Étude d’impact COVID19 (2020), DigitalGO (2019), Round the Block (2018-), Digital Shift (2018), MagNet Strategic Planning for the Dynamic Web: How arts mags can plan and grow online in a constantly shifting environment (2018), Managing Creativity in a Digital World / Gestion de la créativité dans un monde numérique (2017), Produce You (2017), Gathering Insight (2017), The Whole Can (2017), Arts Working Group (2016-19), Raising Diversity (2013), Just Dance It (2012), The Edge of Collaboration (2012), Agent Dance (2011)

Major producing credits:

The Whole Shebang, The Ontario Shebang, Beside Each Other (Dreamwalker Dance), Art of Peace, The Apology Project, Canada’s National Voice Intensive (lbs/sq”), CCAFT, Body Brake, Cascade, AiR Audience in Residence (Anandam), Shudder (hum), 20/20 Vision, Abattoir, Birds Eye View, Porch View Dances (Kaeja d’Dance), Youth Arts Ambassadors Program, 2016 Ontario Tourism Strategy with \$8 million impact (Ontario Culture Days)

Other | Various (1988 - present)

Mid- and senior-level executive management positions at **Music @ The Banff Centre, Workman Arts, Kaeja d’Dance, Dance Umbrella of Ontario**, Dance Committee member @ **Toronto Arts Council**, Peer Advisor @ **Ontario Arts Council (Arts Services)** and **Canada Council for the Arts (Digital Strategy Fund)**, music instructor at **Royal Conservatory of Music** and **BC Conservatory of Music**, executive producer of **First North American Conference on Bisexuality, Gender, and Sexual Diversity 2001**, integrated artist

Education

- **Cloud Computing and Big Data**
University of Toronto (2017)
- **Impact Accelerator**
Innoweave (2017)
- **Collective Impact**
Tamarack Institute (2017)
- **Entrepreneurship 101**
MaRS (2017)
- **MOOC: Managing the Arts**
Goethe Institute (2016)
- **Arts Administration**
John Molson School of Business, Concordia University (2006)
- **Fundraising Management**
British Columbia Institute of Technology (2005)
- **DMA, Music Composition (Incomplete)**
University of British Columbia (1995-1997)
- **MMus, Composition, Electroacoustics**
University of British Columbia (1992-1994)
- **BMUS, Composition, Flute**
Queen’s University at Kingston (1988-1992)

Honours

- Wolf Willow Institute Positive Deviants (2021)
- Toronto Arts Council Leaders Lab (2019)
- Humberto Santos Award in Business + Administration (2006)
- Gaudeamus International Young Composers Competition (1997)
- SOCAN Young Composers Competition (1994)
- Vancouver New Music Young Composers Competition (1992)
- Istvan Anhalt Award in Electroacoustics (1992)
- Maurice Dubin Prize in Composition (1991)

Grants

- **Department of Canadian Heritage** (2021-22)
- **Employment and Social Development Canada** (2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017)
- **Canada Council for the Arts** (2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2011, 1996)
- **Ontario Arts Council** (2017, 2016, 2015, 2013, 2011, 2010)
- **Ontario Trillium Foundation** (2018)
- **Toronto Arts Council** (2018)
- **City of Toronto** (2021)